CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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President: Mr. Luvsandorjiin Bayart (Mongolia)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 518th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference will today continue its consideration of agenda item 4, "Chemical weapons". However, under rule 30 of the rules of procedure, any representative wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of France, Ambassador Morel, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. MOREL (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, let me say first of all how pleased my delegation is to see you acting as President of the Conference for the month of July. We are sure that the experience and skill you have long displayed will help us to make significant progress in our work. Let me add that your knowledge of our language and your vigilance with regard to the use of French are highly appreciated and are for me personally additional grounds for satisfaction. May I also say, as I have already had occasion to do, that it is a further source of satisfaction to see you in the Chair during the month in which both the Mongolian and the French national holidays fall.

I should also like to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador García Robles, for the exemplary way in which he presided over our work in June during the important period when the Conference was resuming its work.

Mr. MOREL (France): All delegations have stressed, from the very beginning of this session, how much the recent improvement in the international situation is helping to revive the negotiations on arms control and disarmament. We, of course, share that view. But how can we fail to notice at the same time that there is no reason at all for euphoria? We can see still more clearly in these favourable circumstances that disarmament will not come about by itself. Now that we have got past the stage of breaking the political deadlock, we have entered upon another period which may be, which ought to be, a period of consolidation. If I hesitate, it is because we realize every day that an unceasing effort is required to equip ourselves for future success. This applies to the major negotiations under way in the nuclear, chemical and conventional fields, but also to space, and to the other items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Nothing can be gained in the field of disarmament without stubborn effort. The international community is too big, the challenges of security are too complex and the progress of technology is too disconcerting for us merely to sit back and say the wind is in our favour. Let me add here that being at present Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, I am made very directly aware of the chances and risks involved in disarmament negotiations. The process of drafting the future convention banning chemical weapons, which I will not discuss today, speaks volumes, more perhaps than might be thought, on the opportunities and difficulties involved in the present situation. The Paris Conference has given an unprecedented boost to our negotiations. But it has not freed us from the difficulties inherent in

(Mr. Morel, France)

this unique exercise, and we realize every day that to "redouble our efforts" is not just an empty phrase or a useful formula, but a practical necessity. In a little over a month I shall be introducing the Committee's report to the Conference, that is to say, the new version of the "rolling text", and at that time I shall have to review all aspects of the chemical negotiations. Today I will just say that the remaining month's work we have to do on the substance is of the greatest importance. I believe all delegations are aware of the fact. They have all in various ways indicated their availability, and the Committee has put itself in a position to make progress. It is now up to each of us to play his part.

But I should like today to range further afield and begin by pointing out that the major disarmament negotiations are marked by one and the same imperative, one and the same urgency. How indeed could we fail to meet the challenge of the extraordinary combination of circumstances before us?

In the field of nuclear disarmament, first of all, the bilateral negotiations on Soviet and United States strategic arms and on space have just started up again. We all know their aims, which are ambitious ones, particularly the 50 per cent cut in stockpiles, and my country supports those aims. Even if no specific deadline has been set, everybody agrees that these negotiations cannot go on for ever without producing any results. The two partners wanted to reach a conclusion by the end of 1988. Circumstances prevented them from doing so, and we all know that the matter is a particularly difficult one. But the international community can and should remind the two most heavily armed Powers of its legitimate impatience to see them achieve the goal they themselves have set.

As far as conventional disarmament is concerned, these negotiations are also ambitious ones, since to find a stable level that would be adequate for the conventional armed forces in Europe of the countries belonging to the two alliances would end the overarming which has dominated our continent's history for more than 40 years and impeded its free development. For those who negotiated the terms of reference in Vienna the aim was to succeed in the near future, within a few years. The top leaders of the Western countries meeting at the NATO summit last May decided to reduce the period still further. My country, which launched the proposal for a disarmament conference in Europe 11 years ago, at the first special session, a proposal that has now become a reality, expects a great deal from the stimulus thus given to these major negotiations. First reactions from the East seem to be promising. What now has to be done is to draw the practical consequences in Vienna.

Returning for a moment to the negotiations on a convention banning chemical weapons, I note that without fixing a deadline, the Paris Conference emphasized in its debates, and also in the Final Declaration of 11 January, how essential it was to achieve success within the next few years.

What all this means is that we are faced with an exceptional set of circumstances implying the conclusion within a brief stretch of time of major negotiations in three fields - nuclear, conventional and chemical - and three separate exercises - bilateral, regional and multilateral. The most remarkable thing, perhaps, is that this is not a prearranged plan; this triple

(Mr. Morel, France)

rendezvous is first and foremost an indication of the impatience of both Governments and peoples, which are now resolved to break the vicious circle of ruinous overarming.

If the disarmament negotiations are today seeking with one bound to advance the course of history, they must more than ever remain within the limits of what is reasonable. Since there are now various real opportunities for us to seize, clearly identified by agreement between States, we should be particularly suspicious of utopias and guard against disputes of an ideological nature. It is not by assailing the present state of affairs in international security that we shall improve it. It is not the practice of deterrence that is to be condemned, but war in all its forms, which must be made ever more impossible. It is not by attacking a country's legitimate defence options as a matter of course that we shall get progress in disarmament negotiations.

As far as my own country is concerned, I would remind you that it is ready to participate in nuclear disarmament when the time comes, once three well-known conditions are fulfilled, namely, a radical change in the present gap between our strategic resources and those of the United States and the USSR, a halt to the race in defensive technology, whether space, anti-missile or anti-submarine, and the implementation of conventional disarmament and total prohibition of chemical weapons. For the time being, France notes that the two super-Powers' stockpiles are still growing, even if the recent Treaty on intermediate nuclear forces has for the first time committed its signatories to genuine destruction of some weapons. While waiting for this trend to be followed up worldwide, France will therefore continue to maintain forces of a quality and quantity just above the credibility threshold, in the belief that strict sufficiency is the golden rule in security.

I would remind you in this connection of France's position on the cessation of nuclear tests. We consider that it is not a real priority in nuclear disarmament, and, for reasons I have just mentioned, we cannot accept a total ban imposing programmed obsolescence on our forces, which would undermine our security capacity. The two super-Powers are free to set their own rules themselves. Whatever agreements they may reach, it is clear that the considerable experience they have accumulated in this field over the past 40 years puts them in a different situation from us. Our criterion is and remains the sufficiency necessary to maintain our security.

As far as the work of the Disarmament Conference on these matters is concerned, we shall not stand in the way of any procedural agreements that may be reached, but, as in the past, we shall refrain from participating in any exercise which corresponds to a conception of nuclear disarmament that we do not share.

If there is another aspect of nuclear disarmament in which we have to be reasonable, it is the question of short-range nuclear missiles stationed in Europe. I will merely say that we do not believe it is possible to change the order of priority that emerges clearly from the negotiations now under way.

After mentioning chemical, conventional and nuclear weapons, I should now like to deal at greater length with space, which is not given the importance it deserves in multilateral forums. Rather than attribute this to ill-will on

(Mr. Morel, France)

the part of States, it would be better to recognize the special nature of space activities, which makes them complicated to deal with. Space differes from other sectors of disarmament in that the main kinds of equipment involved, i.e. satellites, use technology that is still evolving. A state of continuing uncertainty as to their future development prevents us from weighing all the strategic implications and thus limits the possibility of negotiating on such systems. Hence it is difficult to distinguish in advance what is important in security terms from what is secondary, and what is dangerous from what is effective.

Faced with such complexity, we should avoid over-simplification and look the facts clearly in the face, which means in effect recognizing certain points: it would be both illusory and inopportune to envisage complete demilitarization of outer space; the present legal régime for space is not adequate by itself to prevent an arms race there; an absolute ban on anti-satellite systems appears to be unverifiable in practice, because no general régime can effectively cover very different kinds of devices; finally, the anti-satellite and anti-missile fields are closely linked, and no multilateral regulation exercise aimed at prohibiting the permanent placing of weapons in space could advance independently of the United States-Soviet bilateral negotiations, nor a fortiori more rapidly than those negotiations.

These few considerations thus lead us to rule out measures which, however attractive they seem, would in reality be delusive or unsuitable for multilateral treatment.

Does this mean we should give up and regard the prevention of an arms race in space as too much for the international community? Certainly not. The multilateral bodies, and first and foremost the Conference on Disarmament, have a special role to play, alongside bilateral efforts, in promoting further thought on these subjects and resolving the deadlock we are faced with at the moment.

We should first of all continue to improve our technical knowledge of the issues and difficulties of disarmament in space, without which it will not be possible to reach any specific agreement on the means to be applied. The Conference on Disarmament can and should also identify pragmatically the fields in which a consensus seems possible here and now. From this standpoint, France notes that there has been a welcome change of attitude in two important fields, on which I should now like to dwell: firstly the increasing recognition of the usefulness of space for monitoring and verification; and secondly, the growth in many countries' interest in the subject of the legal immunity of satellites.

As regards the first, the development of facilities for observation shows that space is not just an area for disarmament; it is also a potential tool of disarmament, given the possibility of satellite verification of agreements. Recent trends, marked in particular by growing recognition of the stabilizing role of observation satellites and the appearance of high-resolution satellites other than those of the United States and the USSR, mean that one can envisage a greater contribution by space facilities to the verification of disarmament agreements and confirms in the event the validity of the course France has been proposing since 1978.

(Mr. Morel, France)

After submitting at the first special session on disarmament a proposal for an international satellite monitoring agency (ISMA), which was thoroughly studied by a United Nations group of experts from 1979 to 1981, France proposed at the third SSOD in June 1988 that the first phase envisaged under the ISMA should be implemented, in the form of an agency for the processing of satellite images, or APSI.

Without giving up the more ambitious objective set in 1978, we have since realized the need in present circumstances to distinguish very clearly between monitoring and verification. The latter is only possible within the framework of a specific agreement, in order to ensure that the agreement is being complied with, and it can only be carried out by the countries parties to that agreement.

It would certainly be conceivable, in the long term, to develop, for the benefit of the whole international community or of the parties to a particular treaty, either general observation satellites or specialized satellites for the verification of compliance with a particular provision. That is one of the things envisaged for the third phase of the agency we proposed in 1978.

But it seems to us preferable at the present stage to set as the objective for the initial phase the pooling of existing data. The space image processing agency proposed in 1988 would not cost very much, but it would enable national experts to be given the necessary training in the interpretation of space images and above all would make it possible to assess what could actually be achieved with satellites later on in the fields of monitoring and verification. This preliminary phase should thus provide an opportunity to determine the specific requirements for new systems and possible future applications.

It must however be clear that such an agency would merely be a confidence-building device and would not be designed to form the embryo of a verification system attached to the United Nations with universal competence. The principle of the specificity of verification in fact argues against the idea that the international community as a whole should be responsible for verifying any disarmament agreement, whatever its nature and whoever the parties, and seek to employ one single instrument for that purpose. The way to achieve the best possible use of space facilities for purposes of security, stability and disarmament is thus for the time being to establish as clear a distribution of responsibilities as possible. If we try and mix everything up together, we shall not make progress anywhere.

The same applies when we make a combined effort to guarantee the security of space activities that deserve to be protected, which is the second component of our proposals in this field. We should continue our efforts to arrive at a consensus on measures acceptable to everyone in order to prevent the arms race in space. But the present difficulties show that the legal approach, through satellite immunity, is the one most in keeping with the Disarmanent Conference's capacity for action. We observe with interest, moreover, that this theme is coming up more and more often in statements made at this Conference. The idea of immunity is at the heart of the proposals submitted by France in recent years. We should like today to propose that the

(Mr. Morel, France)

international community's work in this field should be organized around three points, which will be developed this afternoon in the statement to be made to the Ad hoc Committee by Mr. de La Chapelle, an expert from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The first point we propose, and there are three of them, is the principle of non-interference. Recognizing to start with that the only effective criterion for identifying satellites deserving protection is whether or not they have the capacity to interfere actively with another satellite, we can arrive at a precise definition of the principle of non-interference with non-aggressive space activities, which should apply to all devices that are not themselves equipped for such interference. For the time being, this principle is not mentioned explicitly except in United States-Soviet bilateral agreements. It has the merit of being much more precise than the provision in the Charter of the United Nations on the simple non-use of force and should therefore, in our view, be given fully explicit recognition by the international community as a whole. Such confirmation might not be enough on its own to give space objects absolute protection. But it would at least enable the States to make a precise commitment on a common rule already formulated and designed precisely for space activities.

The second point we are proposing in order to organize the work is the space code of conduct. It is clear that adoption of the principle of non-interference will not have any effect unless it is accompanied by definite rules to facilitate compliance, in two ways.

Firstly, implementation of the principle of non-interference requires first of all a better knowledge of the characteristics of space objects, and hence a strengthening of the Registration Convention of 1975. The degree of precision that would be adequate remains to be determined and the legal framework to be adopted for the new régime has not been established. Should we revise the 1975 Convention or adopt a new document? It is still too early to decide. On the other hand, it should be possible to determine in an initial stage the possible content of such a strengthened registration régime with a view to promoting greater security for space activities.

Secondly, as far as this code of conduct is concerned, however reliable the future registration régime may be, it should be accompanied by precise rules of behaviour for space objects in order to reduce the risk of incidents, and above all to avoid their misinterpretation. Ignorance of the space environment and the diversity of possible kinds of interference with equipment in orbit might at a time of tension cause cessation of the operation of one of these satellites to be misinterpreted as being the result of hostile action justifying retaliation. The aim is thus to have a better knowledge at all times of the immediate environment of each space object, and hence of the dangers to which it is exposed.

These two components, the registration system and the rules of behaviour, should constitute an initial code of conduct, which would be expanded later as space activities developed. This pragmatic approach, based on confidence-building measures, could in our view constitute an acceptable working basis for all States. It does not prejudge their readiness to sign

(Mr. Morel, France)

prohibition or limitation agreements later on and does not in any way impede the bilateral negotiations. It is not designed to achieve by roundabout means the equivalent of prohibition, but at the same time it does leave room for adjustment to developments in technical capacities and to increases in confidence so that more binding measures could be worked out if States came to want them.

The third point for organizing work on the prevention of an arms race in space is the trajectography centre. The strengthened registration system and the formulation of rules of conduct will have to be based on an appropriate instrument reconciling the requirements of technological and military confidentiality with the need to gather all the requisite information concerning the trajectories of all satellites. After an initial consideration of this question, my country takes the view that a centralized data system could store and process, without publishing them, the parameters communicated at the time of registration and on subsequent updatings. The trajectography centre would be permanently engaged in calculating all the available trajectories and as such would have a double role: under normal circumstances it would spontaneously issue a warning if satellites were getting too close on the same orbit or were liable to pass too close; in the event of an accident leading to allegations of deliberate collision, it would be able through consultation machinery to furnish proof of good faith. Such a system could be run discreetly and simply. It would be attached, like the agency for the processing of satellite images, to the United Nations Secretariat and would be open to all States possessing or using satellites that wanted to take advantage of it.

Those are the main proposals that our expert will be submitting to the Committee this afternoon.

I should like, finally, to turn briefly to three other items on our agenda, namely, negative security assurances, radiological weapons and the comprehensive programme of disarmament. On the first of these items, my country has already indicated on a number of occasions, in the appropriate Ad hoc Committee, that it was ready to join with other delegations in trying to find a common arrangement by which the nuclear Powers would give the non-nuclear-weapon countries assurances against the use or threat of the use of such weapons.

But here again we must be careful not to be unrealistic. Working out such a formula is not just a matter for the nuclear Powers, which have already given credible assurances in the form of unilateral declarations. This will have to be a joint effort, which cannot disregard the existence of those declarations. Any partial or unbalanced approach, any kind of accusation, can only hinder this effort.

I should like to make it plain to the Conference here that I cannot pass over in silence the remarks made recently on this matter by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both because of their substance and because of the fact that the representative of that country to the Conference on Disarmament is acting this year as Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances, I have to say that to present a caricature of the situation does not help us to arrive at the compromise solutions we all want.

(Mr. Morel, France)

As far as radiological weapons are concerned, my delegation has noted with interest the ideas put forward by the representative of Hungary on the scope of a convention banning such weapons in the traditional sense. These ideas deserve careful study in Contact Group A of the Ad hoc Committee. As far as the prohibition of attacks on civilian nuclear facilities is concerned, on the other hand, we understand the interest in this subject, but we must say once again that we still think the Conference on Disarmament is not competent to negotiate an agreement in this field. As the representative of Peru has pointed out, nuclear facilities are already protected by the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and if strengthening of the system is necessary, it is within that framework that it would have to be negotiated.

Finally, on the question of the comprehensive programme of disarmament, my delegation has constantly sought to indicate its willingness to contribute to the efforts being made to find generally acceptable solutions to the questions that are still outstanding. It hopes that here too a spirit of compromise will prevail and that a consensus can emerge on the whole range of complex fields covered by the comprehensive programme. The time already spent on drafting the document is in itself a sign of the difficulty of the exercise. Let us therefore beware of simplistic or over hasty formulas; let us prefer pragmatism to dogmatism.

Throughout this statement, I have tried to stress that disarmament will not come about of its own accord and that we cannot bring it any nearer by means of slogans or clichés. Developments in this field in recent years, and indeed in recent months, have been very instructive: where a genuine opportunity has been duly identified and there is a real desire to succeed as soon as possible, there can be rapid, substantial, and I would even say exceptional progress. That is true in relations between two States, or at the level of a region, but also for the whole international community, that is to say, in particular for the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the distinguished representative of France, Ambassador Morel, for his statement and for his kind and generous words for the Chair.

I have no further speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to speak? I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. ARDAKANI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since the distinguished Ambassador of France referred to the statement by our Foreign Minister here regarding the work of the Conference, I think it is not a matter of dispute, but rather that both are speaking for the same goal, probably from a different angle, and I think this is a healthy way of conducting the work. As Ambassador Morel has stressed again, all of us are trying to find a common formula in the areas that we think are important for the work of the CD and ad hoc committees have been established for it. I think we would take what Ambassador Morel has said as a way of offering further collaboration rather than raising a point of dispute.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to speak? That does not seem to be the case.

I now turn to the requests made by non-member States to participate in the informal meeting for consideration of further measures in the field of disarmament to prevent an arms race on the sea-bed, the ocean floor and the sub-soil thereof. The relevant draft decisions have been circulated today in working paper CD/WP.369 and Add.1-10. The States parties to the sea-bed treaty which are asking to participate in the informal meeting are the following: Austria, Ireland, Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, Spain, Malaysia, Finland, Turkey, New Zealand, Norway and Denmark. Since there has been no objection to the idea of inviting the non-member States concerned to participate in the informal meeting, I suggest that we should now consider all the requests together. It is of course understood that that will not constitute a precedent for the work of the Conference. If there are no objections, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the draft decisions.

It was so decided.

I would remind delegations that immediately after today's plenary meeting, the Conference will hold an informal meeting for consideration of further measures in the field of disarmament to prevent an arms race on the sea-bed, the ocean floor and the sub-soil thereof. There are no further items to consider today, and I shall therefore adjourn the meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 July, at 10 a.m.

The plenary meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.